

# **Network of Alabama Academic Libraries Collection Assessment Manual**

Originally developed by the  
Collection Development Committee

Revised by the  
Online Content Committee  
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NETWORK OF ALABAMA ACADEMIC LIBRARIES  
Alabama Commission on Higher Education  
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# **Network of Alabama Academic Libraries Collection Assessment Manual**

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## FOREWORD

Academic libraries in Alabama exist to serve the educational needs of students, faculty, and other researchers. All face challenges to deliver high quality information in an increasingly digital age. Some challenges are familiar: the growth of knowledge in the twenty-first century continues to influence and increase demands for new fields of study. Escalating prices for books and journals are not met with equal increases in library support. Other challenges are more recent, such as the rapid rise of the Internet which is transforming educational practices. New technology also stimulates the development of electronic information resources, requiring new investments by libraries in technology infrastructure. Consequently, libraries must expand greatly their collecting practices to capture the breadth and depth of information required to assure every student and researcher with information needed for high-quality instruction and research.

In the early 1980s, Alabama academic librarians prepared a report which led to the establishment of the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries (NAAL). The Network was formally organized as a consortium of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and the state's publicly-and privately-supported academic institutions offering graduate education. Initially funded in 1983, it began an ambitious program to fulfill the recommendations identified in *Cooperative Library Resource Sharing Among Universities Supporting Graduate Study in Alabama*.<sup>1</sup>

The report made recommendations on five topics: collection development, staff adequacy, facilities requirements, bibliographic and physical access to library services, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Cooperative Library Resource Sharing Among Universities Supporting Graduate Education*. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Commission on Higher Education, 1984.

computerization and networking. In every area, Alabama academic libraries were woefully inadequate when compared with minimum standards and peer institutions. One recommendation called for ACHE to “develop a reasonable mechanism for reviewing library collection adequacy as part of the process of review and approval of new academic programs [to] insure that collections adequate to support these programs are in place or will be funded within five years from initial program approval.” Another recommendation was for NAAL to “initiate a statewide series of coordinated academic library analyses to identify the collection strengths and weaknesses of each academic library” and use data from these analyses to “eliminate existing quantitative and qualitative collection deficiencies....”<sup>2</sup>

A Collection Development Committee, representative of the NAAL membership, was appointed to develop strategies to meet these recommendations. As a result of their investigations of assessment methodologies, they developed a *Collection Assessment Manual* in 1987.<sup>3</sup> Although the manual was intended initially to describe assessment methodologies for new program proposals, it quickly demonstrated its usefulness for broader applications. For example, the manual has provided guidance for institutions reviewing existing programs and completing self-studies required by accrediting agencies.

In the years since its publication, the NAAL *Collection Assessment Manual* has provided a solid framework for collection assessments for a variety of purposes. However, the growing importance of electronic resources required that NAAL revise the Manual to assure that all appropriate publication formats would be incorporated into the assessment methodology. In

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<sup>2</sup> *Cooperative Library Resource Sharing*...., p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Collection Assessment Manual*. Montgomery, AL: Network of Alabama Academic Libraries, Alabama Commission on Higher Education, 1987.

2002, NAAL's Online Content Committee, which superseded the original Collection Development Committee, was asked to revise the *Manual*. With this revision, the *Manual* describes assessment methodologies to assure that an evaluation will incorporate information from all appropriate formats in the evaluation or collection development plan.

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